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SUBJECT: FORCE COMMANDER CHAIRS HIS FIRST CFC MEETINGS, MAKES
POSITIVE REFORMS, BUT FRUSTRATED BY HASKANITA

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Force Commander General Martin Luther Agwai took over Cease-fire Commission (CFC) meetings and is making positive changes (including some that we recommended). However, the inability to investigate the Haskanita violence highlights how weak the CFC will remain, despite internal reforms. End summary.

US, UN OBERVERS OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

¶2. (SBU) During two separate meetings with Force Commander Agwai, S/CRS Poloff presented several proposals for improving the functioning of the CFC, based on input from the US and UN CFC observers. While Agwai wants to improve the CFC, he does not have the time to attend long, pointless meetings. Poloff proposed that the CFC chambers meet one day a week to discuss substantive issues and that he chair those meetings. On the following day, there would be meetings for logistical or administrative matters, chaired by the new Deputy Force Commander.

¶3. (SBU) Another key recommendation is to create a log of active cases and insure follow-up. The CFC Secretariat does not currently maintain such a log. S/CRS Poloff will also draft standard operating procedures for conducting investigations.

GEN AGWAI CHAIRS HIS FIRST CFC MEETINGS

¶4. (SBU) After returning to El Fasher several weeks ago, Agwai chaired the meetings of both chambers on September 12 for the first time. He allowed the representatives to complain about the reduction in the monthly subsistence allowance (MSA) and the lack of logistical/administrative support but then made clear that he expected them to discuss substantive issues from in the future. He also told them to put complaints about MSA and support in a letter, and his staff would either address it or forward it to the Joint Commission.

FRUSTRATION OVER HASKANITA

¶5. (SBU) Serious fighting occurred in Haskanita on September 10, as the SAF attacked the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity, as a reprisal for the Wad Banda attack in Kordofan. On September 11, Agwai issued an official statement expressing concern. He later advised he had wanted the

CFC to review the statement but decided it was more important to get it out promptly rather than delaying it for the CFC meeting. The Second Chamber meeting on September 12 was delayed an hour while Agwai met with JEM representative Gen. Mohammed Bashir and SLA/Non-Signatories Forces (NSF) representative Col. Abdou Ismail. At the CFC meeting, Bashir said the JEM threat to shoot down AMIS flights to Haskanita was a misunderstanding and had been rescinded. Agwai expressed his desire to investigate the incident as soon as possible and was clearly frustrated that he had not yet been able to do so. (Note: On September 12, Agwai told a visiting western diplomat that he felt both the Sudanese Government and JEM had obstructed his attempts to get a team to Haskanita to investigate. End note.)

16. (SBU) Note: At the September 13 security briefing for humanitarian organizations, the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) reported that they were gathering information about Haskanita. They put the casualties at 49 civilians and 200 combatants, although they could not yet confirm those numbers. Concerning the JEM claim that two Sudanese Armed Forces helicopters had been shot down, UNDSS said that one damaged helicopter had returned to the airfield in Nyala. UNDSS had no word on the second helicopter. UNDSS also briefed that five SAF and nine militia soldiers had been killed in a clash between the SAF and an Arab militia. Although this clash occurred near Haskanita, they felt it was not related to the main fighting. End note.

FERNANDEZ